

**Helen Muth: Past Editor:**

The recent *Newsletter* debate seems merely to be an undirected exercise. Considering that ART BULLETIN is a rather prestigious journal, a change in name from *Bulletin* for the Caucus journal for reasons of prestige seems suspect. And represents a loss of continuity assuming we have built some in the last nine years.

My preference is not offered in your recent letter, but nonetheless I will state my preference since I was unaware that such a change was being contemplated within the Caucus, not that I have moved as your correspondence implies. Hopefully, I have not failed to receive material for review.

I would stay with *Bulletin* and state on the front of the issue that it is the Journal for Social Theory in Art Education.

**THE BULLETIN: Journal for Social Theory in Art Education**

On the credits page, I would state that it is published by the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education. I don't see this as a name change, per se. Others might. Otherwise I would be in favour of the shortened version *Journal for the Social Theory in Art Education* simply because it's shorter.

Tenure decisions will not be decided by what we call this publication. Those in "power" have the authority to decide which journals count. It's like "taste." I can say you don't have it and you can't prove that you do. And vice versa. Good faith in the quality of work or value of ideas is not a given. The politics of tenure is a many headed monster.

Robert Saunders: Art Consultant, Department of Education, State of Connecticut: And so/sow/sew dear/deer Jan/Jon/John that is my interest. Before finishing, I would like to remark on (Re)mark!. You missed a mark remark. To remark also means to mark again, and to mark means to mark one/won up, which is to score. To score means different things to a hustler, a composer, a teacher and a football player. In which case does rescore mean to score again in the same place? Ask the hustler?

You might add Taine (Hippolyte Adolphe-French philosopher and literary historian, 1828-1893) to the other side of your mirrored metaphor for whatever he is worth.

Some things I do not understand well enough yet. I could probably understand/standunder poststructuralism more if I had understood/stoodunder structuralism better. Postmodernism is easier because we lived through modernism which was everywhere therefore we thought we understood it because we were familiar with it which is not the same thing.

Anyway/anyweigh/anywhey you/ewe may or/oar maynot/MayKnot come/cum to/too/two my way/weigh/whey of thinking but/butt/butte/beut where does Deconstructionism end and Gertrude Stein begin (!)?

**Book Reviews**

Herb Perr, *Making Art Together Step-by-Step*  
Illustrations by Seth Tobocman  
San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, Inc., 1988.  
Soft cover, 127 pages.

Do not bother with this book unless you are adventurous. Herb Perr expects you to travel on roads unmarked by the deepening ruts of today's heavy bandwagon traffic, often choosing paths that deviate from the four directions pointed to on the more trendy art education compasses. Follow Perr and you could find yourself in front of billboards, theatres, and window displays instead of museums and galleries. You're not likely to run into Ralph Smith.

But if you are ready for a little adventure, Perr and Tobocman may be just the people to act as guides. Their book contains 24 lessons, each with enough information to get you where you are going, but not so much that your total itinerary is a foregone conclusion. Although Perr has thoroughly scouted the trails that he is recommending, no two trips through this territory are likely to be the same.

The 24 lessons each require students to work together to arrive at an artistic statement that reflects their own social realities. As Perr describes them, "the projects range from the creation of socially concerned chalk symbols and a reinterpretation of advertising messages made by advertising agencies to the exploration of symbols representing an imaginary society" (p. 7). The resulting pieces may therefore be better categorized as applied rather than fine art, though projects such as "Performance Art: Multi-Media Presentation" (pp. 96-99) challenge those categories. The book also challenges categories such as Eisner's (1972) "essentialism" and "contextualism", since in Perr's mind the social context is part of the art's essence, so there is no dichotomy between the two. The degree to which you agree with Perr on this point may well determine your reaction to this book.

Perr also sees no dichotomy between individual and social goals. He thus takes a position in what Wygant (1988) describes as a long-standing but unresolved debate in art education, a debate illustrated by the contrasting views of Margaret Naumberg and John Dewey. Influenced by Freud, Naumberg believed the art teacher must stress individual values over social. Dewey, on the other hand, believed that it is through social experience that the individual becomes fulfilled. MacIver (1989) sees Dewey as the clear winner in this debate since "Virtually anything a teacher does will be socially determined and will encroach in some ways on the 'freedom of impulse' that Naumberg was so anxious to protect." Perr, too, is on the same side as Dewey, with a stated aim of his book being:

the development of strong individuals within the context of the group. Throughout [the book], there is a marked emphasis on cooperative group thinking and creative working processes. I see this as essential for the development of self-actualizing individuals (Perr, p. 7).

This self-actualization is fostered, Perr argues, because students will "be responsible for the creation of the intellectual climate where their learning will take place" (p. 8). Perr, however, never fully addresses a related question: to what degree can students actually exercise such responsibility within the context of schooling? It would be naive to think that the students will remain untainted by the system's structure and the teacher's bias. Perr, in fact, admits this when he implies that these lessons will lead to certain types of social and political attitudes. These attitudes are more liberal than they are subversive or revolutionary. The intent is to create cooperative, thinking citizens, suitable for participating in our current democratic society. While I question how well these lessons will actually meet that objective, the book does provide a different starting point than art curricula based on Naumberg-like notions of "self-expression" that promote self-centered individualism and what Freedman (1989) has identified as narcissism.

We can better understand Perr's views on the relationship between individualization and socialization by comparing his ideas to those of earlier advocates of group art activities. Lowenfeld (1957) for one, claimed that group murals were a "therapeutical means" for nine to eleven year olds to overcome natural tendencies toward egocentrism (pp. 189, 198-200). For older adolescents, however, Lowenfeld warned that in making group murals "The strongly creative individual can be hampered by 'cooperation' with others" (p. 353). For both age groups, it was the psychological well-being of the individual that Lowenfeld felt should be the principal concern. D'Amico, too, stressed the individual over the group, cautioning teachers that group projects that failed to give this stress could "injure the child, both psychologically and creatively" (D'Amico & Buchman, 1972, p. 206). For Lowenfeld and D'Amico, then, the emphasis was on the "I", while for Perr it is on the "We".

Not that Lowenfeld and D'Amico denied art education's role in socialization. On the contrary, they saw it as a basic aim (Freedman, 1987). Indeed, the social goals that Freedman describes for Lowenfeld's art program are in some ways similar to Perr's. Both, for example, aim to foster democratic tendencies in students. But the difference between the "I" and the "We" remains. Lowenfeld, like Naumberg, placed his principal stress on psychologizing art teaching, which, Freedman argues,

desensitized people to social life. By focussing on the personal, curriculum denied the importance of culture and politics. The contexts of time and place, of history and community, were lost (1987, pp. 26-27).

In contrast, it is precisely these contexts that Perr sees as the essence of the art activities he advocates.

Perr's emphasis on contextualization also sets his book apart from much of the Getty-promoted discipline-based art education literature, which many feel is wallowing in formalist aesthetics. And, ironically, if you go beyond the surface of DBAE marketing slogans, you may find that Perr's lessons are, indeed, more truly disciplined-centered than many contemporary art programs that claim to be such. As Bruner (1960) originally conceived it, discipline-based education does not simply mean teaching content from selected disciplines, it means teaching the discipline's structure. In art education, Barkan (1966) interpreted this to mean that the student took on the role of a practitioner of the discipline (Efland, 1988). This is exactly what Perr encourages. But he does not shackle his thinking with the current doctrine that there are precisely four art-related disciplines. He wants students to act not only like artists, critics, and historians, but also like curators, craftspeople, researchers, performers, and designers.

It is clear then that, although Perr is not catering to current fashions, his ideas grow out of strong traditions in art education. In fact, in addition to traditions already discussed, there are obvious links in this book to the work of June McFee, Vincent Lanier, and Graeme Chalmers. It is also clear that Perr is building on these traditions, advancing the field's scholarship by posing new questions and arriving at new answers. Unlike many student texts that simply organize and disseminate what we already know, Perr's book is involved with new ideas. Scholarly curriculum design went into the book, and a challenge to our and our students' beliefs will likely come out of it.

Of course, new curriculum ideas will not succeed unless the practical matters are attended to. In this regard, not every art teacher will be able to implement each of Perr's lessons. To do so would require, among other things plenty of art time with each class, resources for visuals and other necessary teaching aids, an art room that is not used for a lot of other subjects, and money to get your students out of the art room and into the community. You do not need a Cadillac of an art program to explore the by-ways that Perr recommends, but it would help to at least have a used Yugo, which leaves out the many art educators who are reduced to hitch-hiking, making it extremely difficult to go anywhere except for on the heavily travelled routes.

In addition, even if you are able to venture off in the directions that Perr indicates, be warned that he does not always prepare you for the trouble spots you are likely to encounter. For instance, just because group activities require cooperation does not mean that the cooperation will happen. One trick, of course, is to keep everybody busy, so Perr suggests dividing students into committees, each with specific tasks. But often the described tasks cannot be done simultaneously, as when one group first does the designing and then another does the production. The teacher, then, has to go beyond Perr's suggestions, organizing meaningful alternative activities that students can do while waiting their turn.

In general, however, these lessons are very workable. You can tell that Perr has spent a lot of time in classrooms and has watched lessons like

these in action. Too often, "field-testing" for this type of text really means market testing, with potential sales, not pedagogical merit, being the main criterion for publishing. That is not the case here. It appears that the principal criteria for Perr were "Will this succeed in the classroom?" and "Is it theoretically sound?"

I think the answer to both questions is "yes". And not only is the content sound, it is well presented. Perr's writing is refreshing. He knows what he wants to say, and he says it without jargon, pedantry, ambiguity, or excess verbiage. Tobocman's straightforward illustrations are thoughtful and effective, providing visual overviews of each lesson and making it easy to find your way around the book without always having to refer to the table of contents.

Yes, implementing Perr's lessons will require some effort, but it will be worth it if you agree with his premises. Putting aside my reviewer's pen and speaking as a teacher, I can say that I am excited by this book. I know from my junior high teaching days that lessons like these can lead to stimulating educational experiences. That is why I have ordered a copy of *Making Art Together* for my Department, another for our university library, and three to distribute among my student teachers out in the field. Since you are adventurous enough to seek ideas in the Social Caucus Journal, you will also want to order a copy - if, of course, you do not already have one.

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## Note

*Making art together step-by-step* is available in the United States from Resource Publications, Inc., 160 E. Virginia St., #290, San Jose, CA 95112, and in Canada from Trinity Press distributors, 960 Gateway, Burlington, Ontario, L7L 5K7 at the cost \$ 12.95 US ( Add \$ 1.50 for postage and handling. CA residents add 6% sales tax).



## Book Reviews

James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988  
Soft cover, 384 pages

This is a book about change that brings into focus some of the issues that many of us have thought about and had vague feelings about, but which have not been articulated. *The Predicament of Culture* extends to ethnography and anthropology the growing realization that universal transcendent forms of knowledge and values fail to recognize the contextualization and relativity of contemporary reality. Along with the redefinition of art education to include the study of diverse visual forms of varying cultural orientations there has been a growing uneasiness about how we define and orient ourselves to non-Western societies. Clifford recognizes that culture is defined from one's position in another culture within a particular political and social context. The questions of "Whose views, and whose values?" are often central to Clifford's examination of authority and authenticity in defining culture.

As African and other countries have emerged from the remnants of colonialism, I have observed international art education students struggling with defining cultural values and authenticity from their positions situated between traditional and contemporary society. The meaning of authenticity and tradition in these very real situations are some of the predicaments that Clifford addresses.

Clifford's book is divided into four parts: Discourses, Displacements, Collections, and Histories, representing in his words "a spliced ethnographic object, and incomplete collection" which does not "add up to a seamless vision" (p. 13). The form of the book parallels and reflects the disjointed nature of Western views of culture today. In effect, the book's form is used as a device to partially convey his message of the hybrid nature of ethnography and the problematic nature of writing about culture from within another culture. In Part One, Clifford examines the nature and evolution of ethnography through the changes in ethnographic authority, evolving through the interactions and dialogues among authorities such as Malinowski, Boas, Griaule, and Conrad. Clifford's writing is packed with the details of major ethnographers' field work, and their views and approaches to writing about culture. The ethnography about which Clifford writes demonstrates that the Western view of culture is not seamless, but has evolved out of the personal and human interactions of authorities coming from various disciplines. These views have contributed to the changes in looking at and writing about other cultures.

In tracing the formation and breakup of ethnographic authority in the 20th century, social anthropology has been faced with the problem of how human groups have been represented to others. Clifford's views are helpful in studying contemporary cultures in that he develops the interconnections amongst the disciplinary base and views of the investigator, the nature of field work and participant observation, and the problems of style and authorship in writing representational text. These are all problems that art educators or others face in the study of cultures today. The shift from observation to interpretation in representing other cultures from within another cultural perspective is well documented. Particular attention is paid Griaule's conception of field work that led to documentary and a more personalized involvement with another culture, the Dogon. The resistance of a people to an ethnographer's questions and inquiries results in either very prolonged cultural interactions or, in Griaule's case, a more confrontational approach resulting in moral tensions, violence, drama, and fiction.

Ethnographic subjectivity that has emerged in the recent era is examined in the works of Malinowski and Conrad as paradigmatic of ethnographic subjectivity. Self-conscious hermeneutic contemporary ethnographers, according to Clifford, owe a debt to the pioneering self-reflexive writings of Conrad and Malinowski.

The multi-faceted and disjointed view of ethnography sketched by Clifford is further emphasized by his attention to ethnographic surrealism of the French deriving from the work of Mauss, and other French intellectuals from varied disciplines. In Part Two, Displacements, Clifford concentrates on ethnography and surrealism in France between the two world wars. Elements of art, literature, and aesthetics are interwoven with ethnography. Ethnography from a surreal perspective is seen as a theory and practice of juxtaposition, a collage of events contrasted to the views of ethnography as a science of human behavior or as an interpretation of cultures. The incongruous is played upon in contrast to the orderly and generalizable in questioning whether or not there may be a bit of the surreal in all ethnographic accounts. Clifford singles out Victor Segalen's accounts of travels in Tahiti and China and Michel Leiris' travels in search of self. The vibrant personal accounts of interactions with other cultures by these and other French travelers contrasts markedly to other ethnographers' distillations or generalizations.

While the Surrealist ethnography contains interesting accounts of cultures, Part Three, Collections, focuses on the relationships of art and culture that are directly pertinent to art education studies today. Clifford suggests that modern views of culture and art ideas function as an *art-culture system*. Culture with a capital "C" represents order over time, continuity and depth, and wholeness that is built into the Western view of art and cultural linkages that go back, at least, to the Greeks. In contrast, Clifford has really suggested a disputed, torn, and collaged view of culture. Clifford questions the Art and Culture linkages and uses in Modern exhibitions. In Particular, he points to *A Family of Art* at MOMA in which the affinities of modern and tribal art are presented in an orderly fashion suggesting universal informing principles transcending culture, politics, and history. It is this type of appropriation that Clifford questions.

While the institutionalized object systems of art and anthropology are seen as powerful, Clifford suggests a change in collecting art and culture in which tribal art is gaining a broader audience including members of those groups associated with its creation as part of the appropriation of collected artifacts from museum collections.

*The Predicament of Culture* will be immensely influential in how students of art, aesthetics, and culture, including art educators, study and define culture; it forces a switch from a top-down to bottom-up views of culture. Clifford has also raised issues of how cultures are represented in writing cultural text that cannot be ignored. Issues of how one approaches and studies another culture, whether as observer, participant-observer, interpreter, documentor, or confronter, raises very real questions that students of culture must seriously consider. *The Predicament of Culture* is not a seamless account of culture, as Clifford readily admits; but, for those willing to follow the many rich avenues, asides and juxtapositions, this book raises important issues and questions that will influence how the serious student views culture.

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## Notes on Contributors

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